

STOREFRONT FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Ines Schaber
Katanienallee 77
D-10435 Berlin

Jorg Stallman
Bleibtreustr. 54
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July 15, 2000

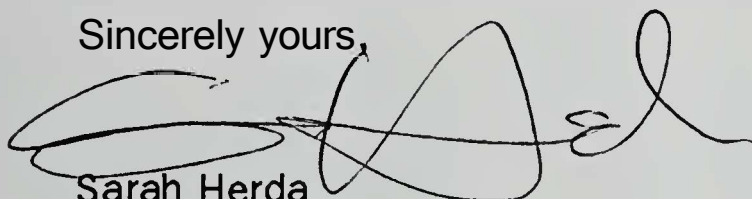
Dear Ms. Scaber and Mr. Stallman,

I am writing to invite you to exhibit your project *Images for America: Architectural Representation of Contemporary American Lifestyle Communities* at Storefront for Art and Architecture in April 2001. We plan to present the work as part of a series of exhibitions investigating the contemporary American landscape.

As the popularity and proliferation of planned lifestyle communities increases, more documentation and study is necessary to begin to understand the impact this phenomena. Your work represents a candid exploration of the ideals, desires and fears manifested in these communities-from analysis of the architectural representation, the planning and marketing strategies of developers, to the expectations and beliefs of the people who chose to make these communities home. These forces are revealed with remarkable clarity in the work you have presented to me and I look forward to the further development of the project.

I believe that this proposed study will be a valuable contribution to contemporary architectural discourse, and I am glad that we will be able to introduce the work to a wider audience through the exhibition at Storefront.

Sincerely yours,



Sarah Herda
Director



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Storefront

From: "Jorg Martin Stollmann"
To: <storefront@mindspring.com>
Cc:
Sent: Wednesday, April 11, 2001 11:13 PM
Subject: text

Sarah, here a short description about the project:
 (We are describing the Phoenix communities through the discussion of
 landscape design guidelines / rules / taste)

Images for America

Phoenix, Arizona, is one of the fastest growing cities in America. In what it differs from most other cities is its special relationship to its surrounding landscape - the Sonoran desert.

In the course of its development, the city of Phoenix has employed a wide range of landscaping strategies to define the ground it is growing on.

Actually, the city history can be mapped through landscaping designs and plant material used.

"In vegetation terms, some neighborhoods in Phoenix are Wisconsin, some Arabia, others are - to the degree they can be - California. Phoenix is a hodgepodge of plants as well as people. Styles in plants come and go, and vegetation alters from neighborhood to neighborhood, sometimes mapping the city historically, sometimes economically. Technology has left its mark. In the 1800s and early 1900s, people depended on huge trees, spreading shrubs and luxuriant grass to bring coolness, shade and moisture to the Valley of the Sun. The advent of air-conditioning did away with that dependence."

The role of landscape changed from a functional one to a landscape that is amenity. It is a landscape for the looks.

What was formerly farmland got turned into extensive housing developments (Fe. retirement communities) after the war. It was the landscaping designs that built the image of the city as oasis in the desert with golf courses, palm trees and extensive lawns in public areas.

In the last ten years, this identity did change. Ecological and economical considerations have led to a new acceptance of the native vegetation. For the first time, the desert itself, becomes the model for the landscaping designs of the city. The city image of an oasis got exchanged for the image of the desert itself, turning the desert into an image. "Desert style landscaping" can be everything from a bric-a-brac collection of Mexican and Texan cacti on artificial gravel - to a one-to-one recreation of the Sonoran desert using the sites own material.

Recently, expensive projects have been developed on the city's edges that are designed to blend as much as possible into the surrounding natural desert landscape. A highly sophisticated technique is used to preserve and recreate the desert, supported by the logistics of plant material relocation and working force - just to create the amazing impression that nothing had

5/11/2001

happened.

The Project investigates on the construction of identity through landscape (design) in Phoenix, Arizona. It is divided in two parts.

The first part is a film. A series of interviews is framed and structured by a documentary journey depicting the relocation of a cactus from the northeast Sonoran desert to a housing development in Phoenix, AZ.

The interviews are with a group of people who have left their traces on the Phoenix landscape - developers, landscapers, landscape designers, nurseries, the desert botanical garden, the city hall. The conversations are discussing the impact that the desert is having on people's settlements and lifestyles and vice versa. What are the strategies they employ to deal with it?

The second part is a series of photographs, drawings and models. They map the itineraries of Saguaros, the largest cacti and symbols of Arizona. The photographs and maps depict the system of spaces that become related through the travel the cacti make from their native setting to their new locations in a development.

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on movers and shapers

Ines Schaber, Jorg Stollmann

September 6. - October 16, 2001

On the outskirts of Phoenix Metro Area where the city is rapidly extending into the native desert, a new form of commercial gated housing developments is about to be defined. These large-scale developments cater to a prosperous clientele, which prefers living safely without having the impression of being gated in. Thus the developments are aiming to blend into the desert, creating edge definitions that are highly ambiguous.

From the outside towards the inside, enhanced desert landscaping creates a strict definition of where the communities' private grounds begin. From the inside towards the outside, the edges function in a very different way. A series of visual strategies insures that any clear division or borderline is avoided in favor of endless views into the untouched native desert. This strategy virtually incorporates everything outside that enforces the feeling of solitude and calm, while at the same time eliminates everything disturbing and unpleasing to the eye. These developments as a whole are based on a visually inclusive construction that is totally self contained.

The landscaping strategies applied rely on a huge resource of native plant material. The increasing demand for these plants has led to a whole industry and trade that ensures their availability from all over Arizona and beyond. The migration of plants is the basis of this domestic landscape, designed to appear to have grown over hundreds, if not thousands of years.

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